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**I**n **D**emoriam

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APR 21 1917





Very truly yours,  
Lester Low.

Board of Estimate and Apportionment  
and Board of Aldermen



Joint Session in Memory of  
Honorable Seth Low  
Monday, September 25, 1916



Minutes of the Special Joint Meeting of the Board of Estimate  
and Apportionment and the Board of Aldermen,  
Held in the Aldermanic Chamber, City Hall,  
on Monday, September 25, 1916, at 4 p. m.,  
in Memory of Honorable Seth Low

## Board of Aldermen.

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Alderman BASSETT	Alderman EAGAN	Alderman MOORE
Alderman BENT	Alderman FARLEY	Alderman MORAN
Alderman BURNS	Alderman FERGUSON	Alderman MULLEN
Alderman BURDEN	Alderman FERRAND	Alderman O'ROURKE
Alderman BROWNE	Alderman FRIEDLANDER	Alderman PALITZ
Alderman CARROLL	Alderman GAYNOR	Alderman POST
Alderman CARDANI	Alderman GILMORE	Alderman QUINN
Alderman CASSIDY	Alderman GOETZ	Alderman ROBITZEK
Alderman COLE	Alderman GUTMAN	Alderman RYAN
Alderman COLLINS	Alderman HANNON	Alderman SCHMITZ
Alderman COLNE	Alderman HAUBERT	Alderman SCHWEICKERT
Alderman COX	Alderman HEYMAN	Alderman SHIELDS
Alderman CRANE	Alderman HILKEMEIER	Alderman SILBERSTEIN
Alderman CUNNINGHAM	Alderman HOGAN	Alderman SMITH
Alderman CURLEY	Alderman KENNEALLY	Alderman SQUIERS
Alderman CURRAN	Alderman KENNEY	Alderman STAPLETON
Alderman DALY	Alderman McCANN	Alderman STEVENSON
Alderman DELANEY	Alderman McCOURT	Alderman SULLIVAN
Alderman DIEMER	Alderman McGARRY	Alderman TOLK
Alderman DIXSON	Alderman McGILICK	Alderman TRAU
Alderman DONNELLY	Alderman McKEE	Alderman WALSH
Alderman DOSTAL	Alderman McMANUS	Alderman WILLIAMS
Alderman DRESCHER	Alderman MARTIN	Alderman WIRTH
Alderman DUNN	Alderman MOLEN	Alderman WISE

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*The Mayor, Honorable JOHN PURROY MITCHEL, presided.*

THE MAYOR—The Very Reverend Bishop Greer will open the meeting with prayer.

BISHOP GREER—



ALMIGHTY God and Heavenly Father, in Whom all creatures live and from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift : We thank Thee for the goodly heritage which Thou hast given us in this favored land, for the civil and religious privileges which we enjoy, for the manifold opportunities of human growth and development through liberty under law, and for all the multiplied manifestations of Thy goodness to us. For these and all Thy blessings may we show our thankfulness not merely with the religion of our lips but with the devotion of our lives. Especially do we remember in this hour the devoted life of Thy servant, Seth Low, who gave himself so freely and in so many helpful ways, to the common weal and good; to whom no human interest was a foreign thought or care, who labored so faithfully, so generously and with such a tireless toil for the welfare of his fellow men. May his example in this respect be prized and cherished by the people of this community as an inspiration to them to make them see and feel the pettiness of selfishness and the nobleness of service. May that spirit of service which he embodied and expressed become more and more the spirit of this city, to purify and cleanse it of lawlessness and viciousness, and help to make it a city which in the whole body of its citizenship shall stand for something else and more than a grasping physical greed with its blighting entail curse of social strife and envy and discord and display; but a city which shall have within it, to inspire it as well as to preserve it, those high and pure ideal aims of a mutual helpfulness and service which prosperity cannot corrupt nor adversity destroy: a city which hath foundations deep and strong, in reverence and righteousness, justice, truth and peace, whose builder and maker is God. We ask it in the name of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Columbia University, recreated and expanded through his genius, stands today New York's proudest institution of learning, a monument at once to his private generosity and to his executive capacity.

As a private citizen, Seth Low never refused his time, his labor or his substance to a movement that meant the betterment of this city. His interest was unflagging, his patience untiring, his zeal unbounded, when the undertaking was one to maintain the honor or promote the greatness of his city. Indeed, those who knew the activities of Mr. Low in public service and the demands upon his time, know that the tax laid upon his strength by these self-imposed duties contributed in no small measure to the shortening of a life New York could ill afford to lose.

Seth Low was a staunch, true friend. It was my privilege to see him often and to know him well during the past few years. In times of stress, he was always ready to respond to a call for advice or aid. Time and again I have had his counsel and assistance when I needed them, and they were always given with the ready generosity that distinguished him.

It is fitting and proper that New York should pay this public and official tribute to the value of Seth Low's services as Mayor, to his worth as a citizen and to his character as a man.

We have invited here to address this meeting three gentlemen representative of the unofficial citizenship of New York.

The Chair will put a motion to accord the privileges of the floor to Hon. George W. Wickersham, a distinguished member of the bar and personal friend of Mr. Low.

The motion was unanimously carried.



Mr. WICKERSHAM—

Mr. Mayor and gentlemen of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment and of the Board of Aldermen, Ladies and Gentlemen:



WE are assembled here today to solemnly record in the annals of this great city a formal and deeply felt appreciation of the life and character of a man whose days were spent in this community, in unselfish labors for the welfare of his fellow-citizens.

Seth Low was born in the City of Brooklyn on January 18, 1850. His father, A. A. Low, was one of the great merchants of the days when American enterprise carried the American flag onto every sea and into every foreign port. The firm of A. A. Low & Company, of which he was the head, was noted for high integrity and unquestioned credit throughout the Orient and especially in China, among whose people the merchant class from time immemorial have maintained the highest standards of honorable dealing.

After graduation from Columbia College in 1870, Mr. Low became, at first a clerk, and later, a partner in that firm. From this parentage and early association, Mr. Low was strengthened in those principles of impeccable rectitude that characterized him throughout his life. But the exactions of business and the allurements of gain did not long absorb his interest.

From his early manhood, the condition of the Government of the city in which he lived, which was in large measure the same as that then prevailing in most of the large cities of the United States, awakened in him a sense of revolt and determination to compel reform. Writing of the conditions prevailing at about this time, Mr. James Bryce said in the "American Commonwealth":

"There is no denying that the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States."

Mr. Low at the age of thirty determined to grapple with the problems of City Government, and he flung himself into a contest for the Mayoralty of the City of Brooklyn as the candidate of an independent body of citizens, endorsed by the Republican party; and in the autumn of 1881 he was elected Mayor.

Two years later, in appealing a second time for the suffrages of his fellow citizens, Mr. Low could truthfully say:

"The whole City knows my re-election as Mayor of Brooklyn would mean just this: The patronage of the City shall not be used by or for any party in the presidential election, national, state or local. I shall ask of those who are in the employ of the City just one thing, that they discharge their duty to the City by which they are paid. If they do that, no enemy can deprive them of their place, and if they do not do it, then no friend can keep them in it."

He was re-elected, and at the end of his second term of office a leading New York newspaper of opposite political faith to his, in summing up the accomplishments of his administration, declared that

"He reduced the City debt by \$7,000,000.

"He reformed the system of granting municipal franchises, so that during his administration all public franchises were honestly got and adequately paid for.

"He filled all the principal offices with men of character and fitness.

"He disregarded friendships and pulls and sternly dismissed all shirkers and incompetents.

"He completely reformed the public school system and put it in charge of a Board of Education of the highest efficiency."

During the four years of his administration of the government of Brooklyn, Mr. Low furnished to his fellow-citizens an object lesson of the possibilities of honest, economical and efficient municipal government, conducted, not as a political machine, but as a great public business. Judged by the two tests which Mr. Bryce says properly may be applied to the government of a city,—“What does it provide for the people, and what does it cost the people?”—Mr. Low's administration was efficient beyond anything that in years had been known either in Brooklyn or New York. But he was made to realize the tremendous difficulties in attaining good city government created by the constant interference with it by legislation at Albany, and by the cumbersome structure of the municipal charter, modeled as it was after that of the State, with an executive dependent upon a local bi-cameral legislature, and with the powers of government diffused and not centralized.

Years later, in a chapter which Mr. Low contributed to the tenth edition of Bryce's “American Commonwealth,” he wrote:

“For many years Americans applied to cities the theories which they had successfully embodied in the Governments of their States. It is only as some of these theories have broken down, when applied to cities, that Americans have begun to realize that they have on their hands a problem, new for them, which must be solved, so to speak, by rules of its own.”

This solution he strove after throughout all his life.

Consistently, from his entry into public life until the end, he advocated the principles of local self-government, the right of the people to nominate as well as to elect their officials, and the responsibility of public officers to the people. He rightly regarded honest elections as the foundation-stone of all possible improvement in government, and by his own efforts largely contributed to a result which he thus recorded in the chapter of the “American Commonwealth” from which I have quoted:

“Forty years ago it was impossible to have a fair election in New York or Brooklyn. Today, under the present system of registry laws, every election is held with substantial fairness. \* \* \*

"It is probable that in another decade Americans will look back upon some of the scandals of the present epoch of City Government with as much surprise as they now regard the effort to control fires by a volunteer fire department, which was insisted upon even in The City of New York until within fifty years."

But the attainment of this great result was yet afar off when, in the autumn of 1889, Mr. Low was elected President of Columbia College, and thus was led for a decade or more into a different field of public usefulness from that he previously had followed.

The time of his election to that position was a critical period of change in the affairs of that great institution. Its needs had outgrown the limitations of its buildings, machinery and organization. It was confronted with the necessity of selecting a new site, providing new buildings and determining upon its future aims and ideals. The history of Mr. Low's great services to Columbia during the eleven years of his presidency may be related more appropriately at another time and in another place. It is sufficient to this occasion to note that the selection of the commanding site on Morningside Heights and the erection of the noble buildings which now so adequately and fitly house that great institution of learning, were largely the result of the energy, the perseverance, the contagious enthusiasm and the boundless generosity of President Low. His work was crowned by the erection at his personal expense of the beautiful Library Building, which he presented to the University as a memorial to his father.

During all this time, Mr. Low never abandoned his interest in an attention to the affairs of the city. Indeed, the guiding principle of his work at Columbia was to draw that institution into more intimate relations with the life of the great city in which it was placed and to become to its increasing and cosmopolitan population an inspiration to higher ideals of civic duty and responsibility, and to prove the consistency of highest culture with true democracy. When the merger of the City of Brooklyn and a number of other adjacent municipalities into the City of New York was determined upon, in 1897, Mr. Low was appointed one of the commissioners to prepare the charter for the new and greater city.

In presenting to the constitutional convention of 1915 his proposed home rule measure, Mr. Low spoke of the work of the 1897 charter commission. He referred to the city's ancient charters, to the vast number of laws which had been passed relating to the city, and he said that the commission was not called upon to deal with a charter that had been made out of hand, but one that was a growth of centuries. A charter such as that, he said, could not be torn up by the roots and the city compelled to start over again, and the charter commission of 1897, like its predecessors, had declined to undertake that responsibility.

Mr. Low's recognized knowledge of the problems of city government, his intimate acquaintance with the laws affecting it, acquired through his labors in framing the charter; and the tangible evidences of his successful administration of the affairs of the great university over which he presided, made him the natural choice of many of his fellow-citizens as the first Mayor of the Greater City.

The movement failed of success. But four years later, a fusion of many different elements of our citizenship who desired to accomplish a divorce of municipal government from partisan politics resulted in Mr. Low's election.

The two years of his administration were momentous in the history of the city. Business problems affecting its entire future, of a magnitude theretofore unparalleled in municipal history, were demanding settlement. After many years of doubt and discussion, the economic possibility of rapid transit through subways had been determined by the award of the first subway contract to John B. McDonald, financed by Mr. August Belmont and his associates, in February, 1900. When Mr. Low became Mayor, the contract for the extension to Brooklyn was about to be let, and the adaptability of electrical motive power to subway uses had been determined upon as the solution of the transportation problem. A terrible accident, resulting in great loss of life, in the Park Avenue Tunnel, had accentuated this need of adopting a motive power other than steam for use in the tunnels under city streets and led to the adoption of comprehensive plans for the reconstruction of the Grand Central Terminal and the electrification of the lines of railroad of the New York Central and New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroads leading into it, under contracts with the City of exceptional intricacy and involving most difficult questions. The great Pennsylvania Railroad system was seeking an entrance into Manhattan Island, and planning a connection with Long Island, and by a connecting bridge across the East River, for the first time to bring New England into direct railroad communication through New York City with the south and west.

The successful negotiation of the contracts for all of these enterprises, involving as it did the determination of just and adequate compensation for the public franchises granted, and the necessary measure of reserved public control to meet future conditions, constituted perhaps the most important acts of Mayor Low's administration. Throughout those negotiations, with the Board of Rapid Transit Railroad Commissioners and the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, in both of which he was a member, he maintained with rare judgment that nice and difficult balance between the due protection of the public interest and a just recognition of the return to which private capital and enterprise fairly are entitled, which can be maintained only by an official conscious of his own rectitude and in whom the public puts its trust.

Both in public and private life, Mr. Low constantly strove to bring about a better understanding between employers of labor and their employees, and he constantly was chosen as arbitrator of trade disputes. He was one of the organizers and an active member, and at the time of his death, President, of the National Civic Federation, which he believed might be made a vehicle for the solution of many labor problems. He had been a delegate to the first Hague Conference in 1899, and he was an advocate of the settlement of disputes of all kinds within or between nations by arbitration, recognizing that very seldom is either party to a controversy wholly and unqualifiedly right in its position, and that when such a case arises, an arbitration tribunal properly constituted

would not hesitate so to declare. He was largely instrumental in procuring the agreement of the representatives of the great railroad systems and of the various organizations of railroad employees, to the terms of an amended act to provide for mediation, conciliation and arbitration in controversies between interstate railroad companies and their employees, known as the Newlands Act, which passed both houses of Congress and was approved by President Wilson on July 5th, 1913, with the heartiest expressions of approbation by all parties. Mr. Low impressed every one with his eminent fairness of view, his broad tolerance, his capacity to see both sides of a controversy, and to perceive the grounds for approach to a common agreement. One of his latest public services was rendered at the request of President Wilson in investigating the complex and confused questions involved in the labor difficulties in the coal fields of Colorado, and his report on those intricate questions, transmitted to the Congress by President Wilson on March 8th, 1916, dealing as it does with many fundamental problems involved in a great industry deserves careful study and embodies suggestions that may be of practical value in the determination of other controversies in different fields.

Mr. Low was in the truest sense of the term a peacemaker, for he sought ever to remove the basis for dissension. In this spirit he for years devoted himself to the cause of the American Negro. He was a true and devoted friend of Booker Washington, whom he regarded as a man chosen by God to lead his people in safe and sane ways along the hard but sure pathway of industry, thrift and self-discipline to that place of independence and respect in the community which acts of legislation cannot secure, and of which popular outbursts of narrow prejudice cannot permanently deprive. He gave to the service of the Tuskegee Institute devoted thought, attention and money. He also was one of the few Americans who took pains to inform himself accurately concerning the condition of the Armenians and his statesmanlike grasp of world conditions and his broad Christian sympathies reached out to embrace the cause of that martyred people.

Among the last public services rendered by Mr. Low was five months of work in the Constitutional Convention of 1915. He received the highest number of votes cast by the people for any of the fifteen delegates at large to that body, and he fitly was appointed chairman of its Committee on Cities. After weeks of inquiry, painstaking study and labor, Mr. Low reported from that Committee to the Convention a measure of self-government for the cities of the State, which, after much discussion and amendment, finally was adopted by a majority vote and submitted, with the remainder of the proposed new constitution, to the approval of the people. It did not meet the wishes of those who desired the city to be entirely independent of the State, nor was it acceptable to those who wish the State always to have and, when the city acts contrary to the views of those in control of the State Government, exercise full control over the city.

Mr. Low recognized that his measure was an effort to steer between Scylla and Charybdis. His explanations satisfied the convention, but did not convince the electors. He pointed out the fact that a city is not a little

state which can by forming a charter take to itself whatever power it pleases, neither is it like a state of the union, which has by right all the powers that are not given up. He showed that the state uses the city in very many particulars as the agent of the state to administer the policies of the state as to those matters in which the state is concerned, and thus he indicated the difficulties of formulating in workable form, harmonious with our constitutional government, the plan of home rule which he believed to solve the practical difficulties of the problem as it exists in the State of New York.

He was greatly disappointed at the rejection by a large popular majority of the work of the convention to which he had given such conscientious, unstinted devotion, but he comforted himself with the reflection that he had given his best thought and most earnest efforts to improve the Government of his state.

It would too greatly extend this paper to enumerate all of Mr. Low's other public services. He was a trustee of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and of many other charitable and benevolent organizations, and in the closing years of his life he enjoyed the great distinction of being President of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York.

How can we in the few moments allotted to these exercises cast up the account of this full and useful life and briefly characterize its meaning to this community? Its strongest quality lay in unselfish devotion to the interests of his human brethren. Like Abou Ben Adhem, he would be written down as one who loved his fellowmen. But stronger perhaps than all other interests, was his love for the City in which he was born, in which his life was spent and to the service of which he gave his best. May we not think of him now as enjoying the freedom of that greatest city, The City of the Great King, whose gates shall not be shut at all, for there shall be no night there, and which is lightened by the Glory of God?

## THE MAYOR—

The Chair will put a motion to accord the privileges of the floor to Hon. George McAneny, also a personal friend of Mr. Low and a member of his administration, and who, recently a member of these Boards, learned with us to value the advice and assistance of Mr. Low.

The motion was unanimously carried.

MR. MCANENY—

Mr. Mayor, Members of the Board of Estimate and of the Board of Aldermen, Ladies and Gentlemen:

**I**T is quite literally true that the whole city mourns Seth Low. To those who knew him personally or officially, or who, in one way or another, met him actively and knew through close contact the excellence of his qualities, the feeling of loss is, of course, the more direct and personal. But there are none who live within the City of New York who do not share today the advantages and benefits of conditions that he helped to create; and there are none even among the very few who possibly have not known his name, who would not, if they were told his story, feel his loss as we do and join in our mourning. And so it is that I may say with truth that it is an expression of the real heart of the city that its government seeks to make through the ceremony of this meeting, and through the action that is to be taken.

I do not believe, and I am sure that no one can believe, that there has lived within our generation a man who has been so closely in touch with the growth and the development of this city, or whose thought has been so closely interwoven with what might be called the city's own thought about itself and its affairs. This has been singularly true of Mr. Low, and thus will he be remembered. When as a young man, a very young man, he became Mayor of Brooklyn, he carried into office the idea that was really the guiding impulse of his life—that the agencies of government in cities are, or should be, chiefly useful for what they may accomplish in improving the working and living conditions of the people who live in cities. It was part of the greatness of his own heart, his never ending concern for the welfare of his fellow men, his willingness to use constantly not merely his own time and energy, but his private fortune, to advance the general good. These were the things that actuated him in everything he did while in public office. He saw clearly that in order to get, through the instrumentality of city government, the sort of service that the people are entitled to, government itself must be efficient, that it must be honest, and that it must be purposely and even scientifically directed toward these ends.

It was this conviction, no doubt, that led to his enlistment among the first of those who advocated the so-called Civil Service Reform, the demand for which had heretofore been heard but feebly, but which, in 1883, was beginning to make itself distinctly felt. He established it as a principle—the first principle—of his administration of the affairs of Brooklyn; and largely through what he did, civil service reform found its practical beginnings in this country. The original state act passed by the Legislature of 1883 had been permissive in its application to the cities, though not as to the state itself. In 1884 the act was made mandatory in its

application to the cities and the state alike; but while it was still a permissive measure, Mr. Low accepted it and made it the law of Brooklyn as, under the statute, he was permitted to do.

So it was through all of his career here in the Greater City—again as Mayor—his insistence that from top to bottom the public service should be recruited according to the efficiency and the honesty of purpose of the men placed in every office or position, high or low.

I do not believe that, within our generation, there has lived an American who has mastered as thoroughly as did Mr. Low the general theory of correct city government, not merely in the choice of means in recruiting its personnel, but in everything else that enters into a proper scheme of municipal administration. It was a fitting thing that Mr. Low should have chanced, at Lord Bryce's invitation, to write that chapter in the Tenth Edition of the "American Commonwealth" to which Mr. Wickersham refers; for it was he who was to do the most, within his day, to answer the friendly protest of the Englishman—that in city government lay our most conspicuous failure.

It was my good fortune to be associated with Mr. Low in the office of the Civil Service Commission during his administration as Mayor of the Greater City. The civil service rules were completely recast at that time. There were amendments to the City Charter that vitally affected the whole body of civil employees. I can testify to the infinite patience with which Mr. Low devoted himself not only to the framing and examination of these measures, but to the reorganization of service destined to be built upon them; to his patience in matters of detail that most men, hurried and busied as he was, would have brushed aside or left to others; to his insistence upon the right idea at every turn, and his repugnance to every suggestion of compromise so long as it was even possible to get what was wholly right.

Some years later—and again I select an instance of the way Mr. Low served the city because it is one of the things of which I have personal knowledge—it was my good fortune to be associated with him in the negotiation of the contracts for the building and operation of the great system of municipal rapid transit that is now developing. Officially, of course, the work lay in the hands of those representing the two boards officially concerned, the Public Service Commission and the Board of Estimate and Apportionment. Mr. Low had been named as Chairman of the Joint Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants' Association to represent these quasi-public bodies before the negotiating committees. It seemed a perfectly natural thing, however, to take him literally into our councils. He had been a member of the original Rapid Transit Commission. During his term as Mayor of the Greater City, he had developed and approved the franchises under which the Pennsylvania system was brought in and across Manhattan, to Long Island. He had been a close student of the whole problem of rapid transit; and he well appreciated that, upon the extension of the system already under operation, depended the future growth and orderly development of the entire metropolitan district. So, as I have said, we brought him into



our councils, and we kept him there through many months of time. He rarely missed one of the many meetings and conferences that we held. He figured with us, argued the points, and again and again used his own splendid power of persuasion when there were deadlocks on subjects of detail. He sat with us until the great work was finished, and the benefit we secured from his wisdom and experience and from the breadth of his vision, it would be difficult to estimate. He saw and supported the theory that in building railroads for the city, we were not only laying the foundation for its physical growth and extension, but that as citizens of today we were promoting the ultimate good of the millions of people who are to live in the city that is to be. He shared our conclusion that we could not treat this great enterprise as commercial merely, but that the lines to be laid out and built should form the network of a comprehensive and properly coordinated city plan. It was this larger aspect that he constantly saw and constantly declared and which, in the end, won. I doubt whether anything in Mr. Low's career gave him more satisfaction than did the outcome of this issue, and I doubt whether he ever enjoyed more keenly his own participation in a matter of public work. Here, too, his consideration was first for the well being of his fellow men, the relief of the sorely congested districts of the old city, the improvement of living and working conditions now and in the broad future throughout its bounds, and the employment of the agencies of city government to accomplish this beneficent and highly sensible purpose.

The city and city government with him were always first. In 1897, for instance, President McKinley asked him to take the mission to Spain at a time when our affairs abroad were growing acutely troubled, at a time when a great man was needed to speak for us at Madrid. Mr. Low was the first to be invited to take the post, but after carefully considering what it would mean to him and to his work, his judgment was that he ought not to be drawn from city affairs. He remained to fight his fights here, and finally to take from his fellow citizens the office for which he cared more than he could have cared for any other—the exalted post of Mayor.

We recall—all of us who have served in these two Boards—how frequently, through the years following his mayoralty, the members of the city government continued to have the benefit of his advice, of his suggestion; how frequently we went to him for counsel; how we regarded him not only as the man who had laid firmly the foundations upon which the rest of us were to build, but as, in a sense, a sage of city affairs, whose word to us at any time or upon anything, we knew, came from a mind full of sound and well-matured conviction.

Mr. Low's term as Mayor was all too brief for the work he had to do. He had time for little else than the laying of foundations—but with the remarkable group of men he gathered about him as the administrators of departmental affairs, and through his own constant personal devotion, he reaped results that few thought possible of accomplishment. He established principles that will live as long as the city government does. In a very literal sense he started the growth and development of the government of the city in the right direction. None of those who have

followed him have failed to profit by what he did then, and none who are still to follow can fail so to profit. The debt we owe him in a way can never be paid. But we shall long cherish his memory—as a man of true greatness of mind and of heart, truly as a great citizen.

#### THE MAYOR—

It is appropriate that the great university to which Seth Low gave so many years of his life should be heard from to-day through its present distinguished president.

The Chair will put a motion to accord the privileges of the floor to President Nicholas Murray Butler, of Columbia University.

The motion was unanimously carried.

MR. BUTLER—

Your Honor and Gentlemen:



YOU have accorded me a privilege which I greatly value. This is the one supremely fitting place and this the one most fitting presence in which to speak of Mr. Low and in which to record the lessons of his life and of his service. You have heard in strong, eloquent words the outline of his life and the sure interpretation of the forces that were active in directing his thought and his interest.

The City of New York was the center of his affections and The City of New York was that for which he wished to live and to labor. If he saw opportunity for service, great constructive service, in rebuilding a university, it appealed to him not so much as a problem in education as it did as a problem in city building and in making in the Great Metropolitan City an institution of learning that should worthily represent the best to which a city aspires. If he saw opportunity for public service in philanthropy, if he saw it in constructive work in this kind or that, it all came back to the problem of the city, to the New York which he loved, to the New York in which he was born, to the New York which he wanted to help make the great capital of the world's commerce and the world's intelligence, and the great guiding force in the policy of this nation and of the nations all round about it.

The relation between the old college in which he found his education and the university into which he so powerfully helped to build it, is a natural and long standing one. That old college, your Honor, stood for a hundred years within stone's throw of this center of the City's official life. It has given to this city six of its Mayors—DeWitt Clinton, Ferguson, Havemeyer, Hewitt, Low and Mitchel—a series of names extending over more than a century, but each one being followed to his task with the scholar's pride and the scholar's satisfaction that a group of men devoted to letters and science and unofficial public service have been able to have a companion and friend step out and take his place as the chief administrator of this Metropolitan City.

This building, so beautiful in itself and so abundant in historic memories, is, of course, the center of the City's official life. Out of it there radiates in every direction those lines of influence and of aspiration which fix and direct the activities that are building the newer New York, not the New York of yesterday, not even the New York of today; the New York of tomorrow and a hundred years after the day after tomorrow. This place is what the Forum was to ancient Rome, the Agora to Athens, the place where we symbolize and properly record public service and activity that touches the public in any form. How appropriate, then, that these two Boards, charged with the City's legislative direction, have set aside an hour this afternoon to pay tribute to a great citizen of a great city.

One mistake that we so often make in our thinking and in our appreciation of men is to assume that all public service must be official service.

Quite otherwise in a democracy. Our officials are simply those who are set apart for a definite time to do a particular thing under limitation of law, but public service is that form of activity for the public weal which finds its expression in ten thousand ways. Some of it is official; the great mass of it is unofficial. It is the work of the man or woman in private life who always sees the public interest first, who is clear sighted, generous, sympathetic, patient, industrious, in helping to clear the public mind, in helping to form and instruct it, in helping to prepare the path for those who are our officials to walk in. Every maker of public opinion is an unofficial public servant. Public opinion is at once the path in which the government walks and the force that holds it up and supports it. Mr. Low from early manhood was a powerful agent in making public opinion. He made it not only on important occasions when large choices were to be made, he made it not only when the eyes of men were fixed upon him because of the conspicuous post that he occupied, but he made it in season and out of season by urging upon others that consideration, that calm deliberation, that patient inquiry, and that sort of public spirit which make us all one in civic pride and in civic patriotism.

We Americans are so apt to emphasize our points of difference and so ready to overlook our points of agreement. Important as the points of difference are this year and another, on this question and on that, our points of agreement are many times more important and more numerous. We are in agreement, every one of us, as to what will make this city happy and prosperous and just and tender and healthy and serene; and every citizen, official or unofficial, who brings to the expression of that conviction, which we shall share, those traits of character and of mind, of devotion and of industry, of high-mindedness and of patience that characterized Mr. Low, every such citizen is following in his footsteps, is learning his lesson, is putting a stone upon his unseen but undying monument.

The city, as Martin Luther told the Burgomasters of the German nation nearly 400 years ago, is not made of walls or guns or material success; it is made of its men and women, and it is out of men and women who care for this city, who will labor for this city in season and out, and who will have an ideal of what this city can be made, it is from them that we build permanent monuments to those who have served us and gone before.

So your Honor, we are building, each in his own way, a monument to our great public servants, those who have been in high office and those who have walked quietly in unofficial life, and when we build it, each by his own public act and public service, however inconspicuous, we are adding to the memory and increasing the significance of the life of Seth Low.

THE MAYOR—

The Chair will now entertain resolutions for adoption.

PRESIDENT DOWLING—

Mr. Mayor, I offer the following resolution:



WHEREAS, in the death of Seth Low, the City of New York has lost one of the greatest of its citizens, and the people of the city one of the wisest and most devoted of their leaders; and

Whereas, Mr. Low through his active public life, twice as Mayor of the City of Brooklyn, as a member of the Commission that brought into consolidation the communities that now compose the Greater New York, and as Mayor, in a critical period of its development, of the greater city he helped to erect, rendered services of unequalled constructive value and of historic importance, not only to the city as a municipal corporation, but to all of its people; and

Whereas, the city has been enriched not only through the quality of Mr. Low's service as its Executive, the principles of administration that he established, the precedents for high-minded and disinterested official conduct, the traditions of rightful usage of public trust, the firm and strong foundations he laid for those who were to build after him; but by his many public services of other character; his forceful part in the solution of the problems of city planning and of rapid transit; his up-building of the great University, that is now one of the city's rarest adornments and priceless possessions; his leadership in the Chamber of Commerce, filling there, as President, a post his father had filled before him; his part in the working out of social and industrial problems of constant interest and concern to this city and to others, the wisdom and fairness of his frequent moderation in the difficulties that flow from differences of position and of understanding between employer and employee; and his able representation of the city in the Constitutional Convention of the State; and

Whereas, in his administration of private wealth given so largely for public purposes, Mr. Low has left another high example of noble living and of admirable citizenship; and

Whereas, in the councils of the city government he was a frequent and always helpful adviser, winning in his public relationships, as he did in private, through personal grace and charm and the warmth of his sympathy the confidence and the high regard of all with whom he had to do; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Board of Estimate and Apportionment and the Board of Aldermen in joint session assembled, the Mayor presiding, constituting the government of the City of New York, hereby record the city's deep appreciation of Mr. Low's services, as public officer and as citizen, and the deep sense of public bereavement with which the announcement of his death has been received. Few men have served the city as Mr. Low did; none will be remembered with greater gratitude or affection.

The resolution was unanimously adopted by a rising vote.

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

JOSEPH HAAG,

*Secretary of the Board of  
Estimate and Apportionment.*

P. J. SCULLY,  
*City Clerk and Clerk of  
the Board of Aldermen.*











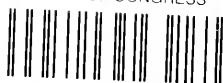








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